

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3038

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T KINSHASA 3550

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CG, MILI

SUBJECT: SHABA INVASION: STRAINS WITHIN FAZ

1. SUMMARY: EVENTS IN SHABA HAVE DEMONSTRATED INABILITY OF FAZ TO EFFECTIVELY REPEL INVADING FORCES WITHOUT HELP FROM OUTSIDE. COMPETENCE OF MANY OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS HAS ALSO BEEN PUT IN DOUBT AND WE ARE BEGINNING TO DETECT STRAINS WITHIN THE MILITARY HIERARCHY DUE TO ORGANIZATIONAL RESHUFFLING, WHICH COULD IMPACT NOT ONLY ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR BUT COULD HAVE WIDER POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, EARLY PHASE OF SHABA INVASION WITNESSED ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL COMMAND IN THE FIELD. THIS WAS DUE IN PART TO DEFICIENT COMMUNICATIONS WITH KINSHASA AND THE ABSENCE OF GOOD LEADERSHIP ON THE GROUND. IN AN EFFORT TO REVERSE THE DETERIORATING SITUATION AND TO IMPROVE THE COMMAND CAPABILITIES OF THE FAZ, A SUBSTANTIAL REORGANIZATION PLAN WAS PUT INTO EFFECT. BG SINGA WAS THUS BROUGHT IN, REPLACING COL. ELUKI, WHOSE LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE CONTRIBUTED TO THE OVERALL POOR SHOWING OF THE ZAIRIAN TROOPS. IN ADDITION, BATTALION COMMANDERS WERE REPLACED BY SEEMINGLY MORE COMPETENT OFFICERS. THE CHANGES DID APPEAR TO HAVE SOME SALUTARY EFFECT. SINGA'S TAKE-CHARGE

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ATTITUDE AND MORE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IMPROVED TROOP DISCIPLINE AS WELL AS THE OVERALL OPERATIONAL PLANNING.

4. THE CHANGES IN THE FIELD, WHILE FOR THE BETTER, MAY HAVE CAUSED SOME DISCONTENT WITHIN THE OFFICERS CORP. IN THIS CONNECTION, PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TO OCCUR TO DATE IS THE APPOINTMENT OF BABIA AS ACTING CAPTAIN GENERAL. AS

REPORTED KIN 2848, THE INCUMBENT CAPTAIN GENERAL, GENERAL BUMBA, WAS ORDERED TO KAMINA THEORETICALLY TO DIRECT OPERATIONS BUT ACTUALLY SO THAT HE COULD BE EASED OUT OF THE PICTURE. SINCE ARRIVING IN KAMINA, HIS CONTINUING EFFORTS TO EXERT HIS AUTHORITY HAVE RESULTED IN STRONG RECOMMENDATION BY THE BELGIAN AND FRENCH THAT HE BE DUMPED ONCE AND FOR ALL. BUMBA, HOWEVER, IS A DIFFICULT MAN TO PUSH ASIDE AND MOBUTU IS FULLY AWARE OF THE DILEMMA. DESPITE HIS INEPTITUDE AS A COMMANDER AND GROSS CORRUPTION, HE APPARENTLY ENJOYS THE LOYALTY OF A FAIR NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND TROOPS. AS A RESULT, THE PRESENCE OF TWO CAPTAIN GENERALS, WHO ARE ALSO LONG TIME ADVERSARIES, CAN ONLY EXACERBATE AN ALREADY TENUOUS SITUATION. BABIA IS A CAPABLE OFFICER AND HIS STAR HAS BEEN ON THE RISE FOR SOME TIME. BUT HIS LATEST INTERIM PROMOTION HAS NOT BEEN VIEWED WITH SYMPATHY IN ALL QUARTERS OF FAZ AND THERE ARE REPORTS THAT SOME OF HIS SUBORDINATES MAY BE PLOTTING HIS DOWNFALL. ALSO, AND PERHAPS MORE SERIOUS, DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT, IS BABIA'S ACQUIESCENCE TO PLACING BELGIAN OFFICERS IN G3 AND G4 SLOTS. THIS DECISION, MADE ON THE BASIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FRENCH AND BELGIAN MILITARY ADVISORS, MET WITH CONSIDERABLE PROTESTS AMONG THE FAZ OFFICERS.

5. AT THE MOMENT THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THE DISGRUNTLEMENT WITHIN THE OFFICER CORPS HAS COALESCED TO THE POINT OF A MAJOR CONFRONTATION. NEVERTHELESS, THE INTERNECINE RIVALRY BETWEEN BUMBA AND BABIA, THE CONTINUED FACTIONALISM AND TRIBALISM AS WELL AS THE ARRESTS OF OFFICERS SUCH AS FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF MAMPA COULD HAVE IMPORTANT POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS.

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